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SUBJECT: Brazil Has Not Addressed Amcits Cases with Iran

REF: 09 STATE 129480

CLASSIFIED BY: Lisa Kubiske, Charge d'Affaires; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) The Government of Brazil has not discussed with the Government of Iran the cases of the six American citizens detained or missing in Iran. Reftel was delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Relations (Itamaraty) Iran desk officer Roberto Salome (currently acting head of the Iran/Central Asia desk) on December 28; he offered no immediate reply at that time.

¶2. (C) On January 5, Undersecretary for Political Affairs Vera Machado met with the Iranian Ambassador. According to Salome, who attended the meeting and gave his readout to poloff on January 7, Machado pressed the Iranian Ambassador on treatment of the Baha'i, specifically the seven Iranian citizens who will be placed on trial on January 12. The Iranian Ambassador told Machado that Iran has complete religious freedom, but that Baha'i is not a religion but rather a secret society implanted by the British during the colonial era, and that its followers are spies subject to judgment. The meeting ended shortly thereafter without discussion of other subjects. Salome told poloff that Machado said to him on the way back, "They must think we're stupid."

¶3. (C) Salome said that the American citizen cases were not on the agenda because President Lula's office specifically instructed Itamaraty to request a meeting to discuss the Baha'i and the Iranian Embassy responded immediately. When pressed, Salome said that Itamaraty had no problem delivering direct messages from the USG, such as about the detained and missing Amcits. He seemed, however, to be missing direction from higher-ranking officers, many of whom are on vacation and will be reluctant to use their capital with the Iranian government on this issue. Salome emphasized that the GOB believes that Iran should return the Amcits immediately, without attempting to link the cases to negotiations about Iran's nuclear program or other issues. With more senior officials now beginning to return from leave, post will continue to raise the issue and report on any subsequent replies.
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